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## 2010 WHITE CANE AWARENESS WALK

By: Summer Beasley-Hoffman, WBRC Mobility Instructor

A stream of over 70 people wearing white and red shirts flowed through the streets of downtown Palo Alto, CA, the morning of October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010. They walked using long white or yellow canes, guide dogs, wheelchairs, human guides, and GPS devices. The group of marchers, organized by the Western Blind Rehabilitation Center, consisted of WBRC veterans and staff as well as representatives from organizations such as the Palo Alto Host Lions Club, Bookshare, and the Sendero Group.

The Grand Marshall was Mr. Walter Sullens, WBRC Alum and organizer of the Tustin White Cane Society. Mr. Sullens led the group, chanting marching cadences into a megaphone and keeping the group in time. Heads of bystanders on the street, in restaurants, and stores turned to watch. Traffic stopped as the walkers marched in force across the intersections. Pamphlets outlining the law were presented to pedestrians and stopped drivers as the group marched by. The message was clear; 'stop for long canes and guide dogs, it's the law'.

Once the walk concluded, marchers assembled in front of Palo Alto's City Hall. The Grand Marshal, Walter Sullens, spoke to the group and encouraged independence, empowerment, and pride. Sid Espinosa, the Vice Mayor of Palo Alto, spoke to the group and expressed support for the cause, accessibility, and community awareness. Smiles abounded and canes were displayed as a group photograph was taken to document the event. The group disbanded, hopeful that the message was received and the community was more aware.



**Summer Hoffman and Walter Sullens lead the WBRC walk.**

# WBRC STUDENT GOES TO D.C. WITH HONOR FLIGHT



**Mr. Seefried visited the Naval Monument in Washington, D.C. with the Honor Flight Group**

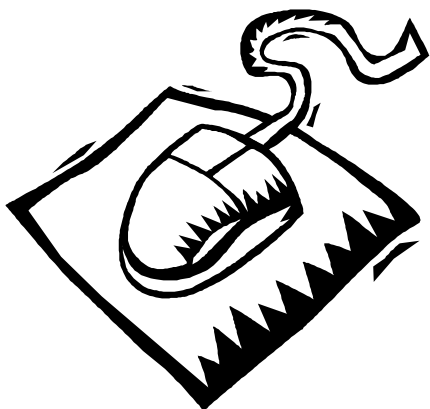
By: Kenneth J Seefried, WBRC Alumnus

On October 7, 2010, I was invited to go on a trip to see the WWII Memorial in Washington D.C. and tour several memorials through the Honor Flight Organization. I was excited and privileged to participate in such a wonderful trip. The invitation was accepted. Our group of twenty-four veterans and fifteen volunteers left from San Francisco on a non-stop flight to Washington, D.C., the next morning.

The first stop on the tour was the WWII memorial. We stayed at the memorial for about three hours. The group had a small

ceremony at the California portion of the memorial which included a wreath laying. After the ceremony we visited the portions that honor each state and territory that fought in the war. The waterfall at this memorial was its most impressive feature. It had thousands of metal stars which represented the people who died during the war.

Afterwards, we visited the Arlington National Cemetery and our group witnessed the changing of the guard. We visited several other historic sites in D.C. including the Iwo Jima Monument, the Lincoln Monument, and the Naval Memorial. The Naval memorial was very meaningful to me as I spent twenty-three years serving in the U.S. Navy. I would like to thank the Honor Flight Organization and Richard Wing, WBRC RN Manager, for making this trip possible for me. It was wonderful to visit these memorials in person. This Honor Flight trip was a once in a lifetime experience.



Check out the WBRC  
Blog Website for more  
news updates at:

**[WWW.WESTERNBLIND.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://WWW.WESTERNBLIND.BLOGSPOT.COM)**

# WBRC PROGRAM STATISTICS

**Statistics time period from April 31, 2010 to October 1, 2010**

**Total Veterans Graduated: 90**

**Average age of Veterans in Program: 68.7**

## **Age Ranges:**

20 to 29 years: 4

30 to 39 years: 1

40 to 49 years: 3

50 to 59 years: 13

60 to 69 years: 20

70 to 79 years: 20

80 to 89 years: 24

90 or more years: 5

## **Period of Service:**

WWII: 23

Pre-Korean: 0

Korean: 17

Post-Korean: 5

Vietnam: 33

Post Vietnam: 6

Persian Gulf: 5

Active Duty: 1

## **Program Totals:**

Regular Basic: 45

Computer: 20

Basic & Computer: 11

CNVR: 10

Single Area Specific: 14

## TEMPORARY WBRC BUILDING BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE

By: Dave Patten, WBRC Mobility Instructor

The VA Palo Alto Health Care System is fortunate to have an unprecedented amount of construction that will create beautiful new facilities. This will enable our staff to provide the highest level of service possible to our Veterans. The WBRC's current building on the Palo Alto campus is now surrounded by construction fences as a new 80-bed inpatient psychiatric facility takes shape. Preparation is underway for a 600 car parking structure, aquatic center, and a new 176,000 sq. ft. Polytrauma and WBRC building. To make way for the new Polytrauma and WBRC building the existing WBRC building must come down. A new 42,000 gross sq. ft. structure to temporarily house the WBRC is currently being constructed on the Menlo Park VA campus. A total of 52 modular sections are being installed to create the temporary WBRC that will allow us to continue providing the best blind rehabilitation services in the country. The construction project is anticipated to last 2-3 years, after which we will return to Palo Alto.



**A crane lifts one of the 53 sections of the new WBRC into place on the foundation at the Menlo Park VA site.**

## ALUMNI AND STAFF NEWS

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Michael Malarsie, WBRC Alumnus, was married over the summer of 2010 to Jessica Lengstorf. Congratulations Michael and Jesse.

Sy Brenner, WBRC Alumnus, published his WWII memoirs in his book 'The Night I Got Killed'. Sy can be contacted at [www.sybrenner.com](http://www.sybrenner.com), enter WBRC for book discount.

Randy Newton, WBRC Alumnus, completed a drafting certificate and graduated from Palomar College May 2009. Randy has also started his own drafting business.

Sharon Hammer, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, was married on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010, to Lewis Bosley. Congratulations Sharon and Lew.

Lila Jaffray, WBRC Clinical Coordinator, accepted a position as the VIST Coordinator based out of the San Francisco VA Hospital. Don Vu is currently Acting WBRC Clinical Coordinator.

Kathy Kelly, WBRC Recreation Therapist, accepted a position as a Recreation Therapist at Menlo Park VA Hospital. Nicole Marquez is the new WBRC Recreation Therapist.

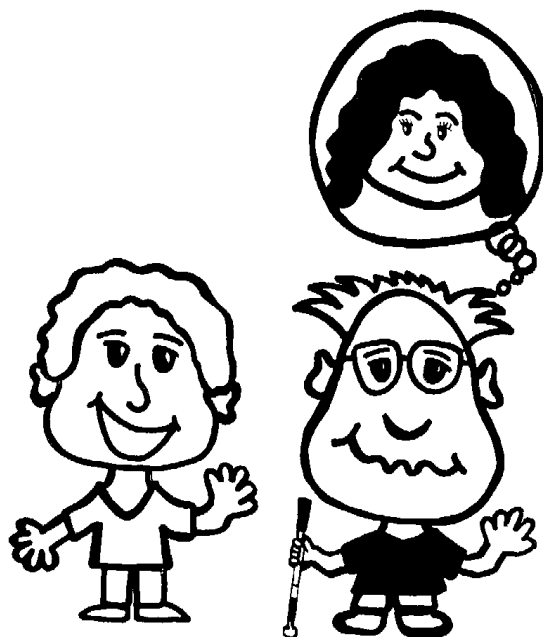
Bruci Hawkins, National Consultant for Blind Rehabilitation based out of the WBRC, accepted a position as the VISOR Chief of Blind Rehabilitation at the Minneapolis VA.

Have news you want published here? Want to write an article for consideration of publishing in the next Newsletter or WBRC Blog? Please contact Summer Hoffman at [summer.beasley-hoffman@va.gov](mailto:summer.beasley-hoffman@va.gov) or call 650-493-5000 x65212 for submission.

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## TELL YOUR FRIENDS...

DON'T PLAY GUESS WHO!  
ANNOUNCE YOURSELF  
WHEN YOU GREET  
SOMEONE WHO HAS A  
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT.





## WBRC'S NEW FACES

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Dr. Ron Schuchard was welcomed to the vision rehabilitation and research community at Palo Alto in July. Dr. Schuchard is a Research Career Scientist and comes to us from the Rehabilitation Research and Development Center in Decatur, GA. He is a senior vision researcher with a joint appointment in the Department of Neurosurgery at Stanford University. His research interests include studies on vision rehabilitation functional outcomes following brain injury, retinal prostheses, impact of dual sensory loss on rehabilitation outcomes, effects of AMD therapy on function vision, as well as other areas. The WBRC looks forward to working closely with Dr. Schuchard to improve and expand our efforts in vision rehabilitation.

Tony Chambers was welcomed to the WBRC in September. Tony is a Technical Career Field (TCF) intern, a position which will train him in various aspects of blind rehabilitation. Tony received his Master's degree in Orientation and Mobility from Western Michigan University after completing an internship here at the WBRC in 2009. Tony is currently assigned to the Manual Skills department.

West Lee was welcomed to the WBRC in September. West is a Technical Career Field (TCF) intern, a position which will train him in various aspects of blind rehabilitation. West received his Master's degree in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy from Western Michigan University after completing an internship at American Lake Blind Rehabilitation Center at the VA Hospital in Tacoma, Washington, in 2008. West is currently assigned to the Computer Access Training department.

Nicole Marquez was welcomed to the WBRC in her new position as Recreation Therapist in September. Nicole received her Bachelor's degree in Recreation Therapy from San Jose State University after completing an internship at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose, CA in 2008. During that internship she worked with the Spinal Cord Injury and Neurological Rehabilitation Units. Nicole worked with the WBRC program for 2 years under Recreation Therapy Service prior to accepting her new position. Nicole is looking forward to the challenge of meeting the high standards for such a progressive and veteran centered program.

Simone Schlick was welcomed to the WBRC as our new Social Worker in September. Simone received her Master's degree in Social Work and Social Pedagogy from the Catholic University of Applied Sciences in Freiburg, Germany, where she specialized in Rehabilitation and Health Care. For the past three and a half years Simone has worked as a Service Coordinator for the San Francisco Traumatic Brain Injury Network, which is part of the Janet Pomeroy Center and the St. Mary's Medical Center. Simone is looking forward to being part of the WBRC team to provide veterans with excellent and comprehensive services.

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# SUMMER SPORTS CLINIC: 2 PERSPECTIVES

## **A Therapist's Perspective**

By: Nicole Marquez, WBRC Recreation Therapist

Down in San Diego, veterans from all over the nation with various disabilities gathered to try and find their "NEW" selves. After receiving their disabilities, the feeling of normalcy goes out the window, along with confidence and accessibility. The beauty of this sports clinic is the goal to re-introduce confidence through accessible sport and recreation. That was exactly what 5 graduates from the Western Blind Rehab Center accomplished. They put the fear of failure and inability aside and decided that their team goal was to try everything and to focus on just having fun.

As their coach, my expectations for each veteran were high because I knew what they were capable of. By the end of the week, each of them succeeded far beyond what I had expected and taught me the best life lesson: Perseverance! In the end each veteran took away some great lessons about themselves and a new look on life. This experience of will aid these veterans in their recovery, increase confidence, and creation of the "NEW" person they want to be.

## **A Veteran's Perspective**

By: Richard Worlitz, WBRC Alumnus

The week spent in San Diego was a week of fun in the sun, sand, and surf! But the Summer Sports Clinic was so much more than that. It was a week of motivation, positive re-enforcement, and most importantly . . . a week of healing. Each day we participated in a different sport. Our first day found us at the Olympic Training Center to learn and train in some of the Olympic events. We spent the first part of the day learning how to throw the discus, javelin and in the afternoon we headed out to the track. With my fantastic guide, Nicole, I was able to shed my canes and was able to walk with long, fast strides. I have not walked that fast since I lost my vision, and I must say, IT FELT GREAT!!!

Day 2 found us at beautiful Mission Bay for the kayaking event. I must thank Nicole for making the kayaking event better than I expected: she wanted me to try the kayaking solo, and it was one of my best experiences. Wednesday was spent on the San Diego Bay learning how to sail. We sailed on the America's Cup winning boat and then each sailed 17 foot, 2 man boats. It was a blast! We had an instructor in the back seat that helped us with verbal directions and it was a fantastic feeling to have control of the entire boat. Surfing was our event on Thursday. That's right ... SURFING! Most of them actually got up on the board and rode the waves standing on the surfboard. How cool, blind guys hanging ten!

As a participant for most of the week I really did not pay much attention to all the staff and volunteers that were at this event. Instead of watching my teammates, I started watching everyone else that was involved. All I can say is WOW! There were a lot of people giving a lot of their time, energy, and money to be there. Thank you!

# VISION LOSS AND DEPRESSION

By: Meredith Smith, M.S., Psychology Intern  
& Laura J. Peters, Ph.D., WBRC Psychologist

With vision loss, it is normal to experience periods of sadness, stress, or grief; however, these feelings will often lessen over time. For some individuals, these feelings do not go away, and when this happens it is called depression. Depression is characterized by feelings of sadness, hopelessness, loss of pleasure in previously enjoyed activities, guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, fatigue, problems sleeping or oversleeping, isolation, irritability, or restlessness that last for most days for two weeks or longer. Sometimes people even have thoughts of hurting themselves. Unfortunately, people with vision loss are at higher risk of developing depression and having difficulties functioning.

Although adults with vision impairment are at an increased risk for depression, there are steps that can help someone cope with the symptoms of depression. Engaging in vision loss rehabilitation can help individuals feel more capable and in control of their lives. Seeking out social support through family, friends, organizations, or support groups can be very effective in improving quality of life and can help with the adjustment to changes in health. Rehabilitation can also support people's ability to resume pleasurable activities that they have abandoned due to their sight loss. Engaging in pleasurable activities can improve a person's mood. Exercising on a regular basis can also help with problems with sleeping or feelings of fatigue.

Sometimes professional help is needed.. Counseling and antidepressant medication can also be used to effectively treat depression. Do not hesitate to talk with your doctor if you feel that you or a loved one are suffering from depression. The VA has a national hotline for individuals who are severely depressed or considering suicide. That number is **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.

## Wondering about VIST activities in your area?



Please contact your local  
VIST Coordinator  
for more information  
about meetings, events,  
and blind rehabilitation services.

# WBRC TANDEM BICYLING PROGRAM ROLLS ON

By: Nicole Marquez, WBRC Recreation Therapist

Tucking in your shoe laces and speeding off down the street on a bicycle can seem like only a childhood memory for many veterans entering the WBRC. That is, until Thursday's tandem biking group, an opportunity for veterans with visual impairments to ease back onto a bike and relive those freeing childhood memories. Being able to fold up their canes, stow them in a holster and take off without the worry of vision playing a role or hindering their experience makes each person on the bike an equal.



**Drawing of WBRC bicyclist  
by Charlie Sandlan,  
Vietnam Veteran.**

Amazing volunteers from local bike clubs come and train on how to safely "captain" the bike for the visually impaired. The program has continued to expand in teaching veterans about bicycle safety, repair, and maintenance. Whether a veteran can only physically ride one lap around the parking lot, or complete a 20 mile ride, the exhilaration and satisfaction remain equal. With the knowledge of their new found abilities, veterans have continued home to connect with local bike groups and find others with tandems who would like a rider.

## STUDENT QOUTES:

"It has been a great adventure and journey full of good memories"

-Jim Deleon, U.S. Air Force Veteran

"I missed me. There's a world still on the other side of this and that's where I want to go"

- Minna Moonsammy, U.S. Air Force Veteran

"We the people, with our own interdependence, can make magical things happen"

- James Jay, U.S. Army Veteran

"Semper Fi. Always faithful. That's what all you people [at WBRC] have been. Faithful"

-Rodney Bulloch, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Medical Center, Building 48  
3801 Miranda Ave  
Palo Alto, CA 94304

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